

Engagement with the Glasgow Gaelic community as a means of Gaelic learning

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Oilthigh
Ghlaschu



The learning of Gaelic by adults

- At least 350 adult learners in Glasgow (Milligan et al. 2011), ~2000 altogether (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2012)
- Adult learners are “vital for the future of Gaelic in Scotland” (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2012: 26)
 - Strubell, Fishman

The dataset

- 16 adult learners of Gaelic, based in and around Glasgow
 - 9 women, 7 men
- Semi-structured English interview and background questionnaire
 - Different learning backgrounds
 - Different amounts of exposure to Gaelic

Research questions

- Do Gaelic learners want to be part of the Gaelic community?
- Do they make use of the community as a learning resource?
- Does desire to be part of this community have any bearing on behaviour?
 - Formal learning
 - Use of learning strategies outwith the classroom

Motivation in SLA research

- Integrative motivation (Dörnyei 2005; Ellis 2008)
 - Attitudes towards the learning situation
 - Motivation
 - Integrativeness
 - Desire to integrate with the TL community
 - Interest in foreign languages
 - Attitudes towards the TL community
- Instrumental motivation
 - Perceived concrete benefits of L2 learning

Gaelic learners' motivation

- Adult learners tend to be integratively motivated:
 - Interested in engaging with Gaelic culture
 - Personal connection to Gaelic-speaking areas
 - A sense of Gaelic being part of national Scottish identity
- Up to 25% of participants learn primarily for instrumental reasons

Participants' motivation

- Instrumental:
 - Good grades
 - GM employment
- Integrative:
 - Desire to become a part of the Gaelic community
 - Passing as a learner
 - Passing as a native speaker
 - Family history of Gaelic speaking
 - Interest in Gaelic culture
 - Gaelic is a part of Scottish socio-cultural heritage
- Language revitalisation

Formal learning experience

- Different amounts of exposure
- University courses
- Evening classes
- Ùlpan
- Immersion courses at SMO
- Distance learning
- GM courses
- Highers

Learning strategies

- Skills-based deep processing strategies (Tragant et al. 2013)
 - Evaluating spoken language
 - Deduction of grammatical rules
 - Inferring meaning from context*
 - Monitoring spoken language*

Learning strategies

- Language study strategies* (Tragant et al. 2013)
 - Grammar exercises
 - Vocabulary rehearsal
- Social and interactive strategies (e.g. Oxford 1990)
 - Practise with other speakers*
 - Clarification requests
 - Seeking interlocutors' support during interaction

Analysis

- But are these things related? Does the desire to integrate with the Gaelic-speaking community actually encourage learners to engage with the community?
- 2*2 Fisher's exact tests of association
- $p < 0.10$

Results

- Formal learning experiences
 - Positive association:
 - Desire to integrate with Gaelic-speaking community and once weekly courses
 - Negative association:
 - Scottish socio-cultural heritage and GM course

Results

- Strategy use:
 - No association:
 - Integrative motivation and reports of practising with other speakers
 - Positive association:
 - Desire to integrate and skills-based, deep processing strategies
 - Inferring from context
 - Monitoring
 - Pattern recognition
 - Negative association:
 - Language revitalisation
 - Evaluating speech produced
 - Grammar study
 - Family history of Gaelic speaking and note taking



Discussion

- Learners do engage with the Gaelic community
 - Strategies requiring interaction more popular than others
- Participants who want to become a part of the Gaelic community:
 - Don't necessarily report practising with others, but...
 - Use more strategies
 - Attend classes more regularly
 - Use interaction for learning purposes
- The most advanced participants all use Gaelic daily for work and/or personal relationships

Discussion

- Clear association between integration and language use/language learning
- As adult learners are “vital”, encouraging integration with the community is extremely important
 - How can we encourage more integration and/or learning
 - If they don’t wish to integrate, will they have a role to play in language revitalisation?